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Embracing Eco-Travel: A Journey to Wellness

Escape the mundane and explore the beauty of nature with our Eco-Travel issue, connecting with the environment in a meaningful way that supports local communities and preserves natural habitats. The idea of escaping to the mountains, inhaling the crisp, untainted air and marveling at the vast expanse of the sky fills me with a delightful sense of joy.

This is your invitation to step beyond your everyday routine and plunge into enchanting wonderlands filled with promise and possibility. By embarking on an eco-travel adventure, we have the opportunity to realign ourselves with the Earth, fostering a deeper connection to the natural world and, in turn, to ourselves, seldom found in the midst of our busy lives.

It is all too easy to neglect the profound healing powers of the natural world. Often, we overlook the restorative potential of immersing ourselves in the unspoiled beauty of our planet. However, we encourage you to consider nature as a sanctuary for the replenishment of your soul, allowing the profound beauty of the natural world to rekindle our sense of wonder and awe, providing us with a renewed perspective on life.

As we embark on our travels, let's remember the impact we have on the environment. Eco-travel is not just a trend, but a necessary shift in our mindset towards responsible and sustainable tourism. By choosing eco-friendly accommodations, supporting local communities, and minimizing our carbon footprint, we ensure that future generations have the opportunity to experience the beauty of our world. It is our duty to travel with intention and respect for the environment, leaving a positive legacy for the generations to come.

So, dear readers, consider nature as your ultimate vacation destination. Embrace the opportunity to escape to the mountains, the forests, or the seashore, and allow yourself to be captivated by the sheer magnificence of the world around you. In doing so, you will embark on a transformative journey of self-discovery and a newfound appreciation for the boundless wonders of our planet.

As we continue to navigate the complexities of modern life, let us remember the transformative power of travel—not just as a means of exploration, but as a pathway to wellness and sustainability.

So pack your bags, set out on an adventure, and let nature inspire and rejuvenate your soul.

Your Adventure Awaits!

Trina & John

HEALTHY LIVING HEALTHY PLANET

natural awakenings

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Natural Awakenings is a network of natural lifestyle magazine publishers empowering local communities with knowledge, resources and connections to lead healthier lives on a healthy planet.

Nourishing Ann Arbor: The People's Food Co-op

Since 1971, the People's Food Co-op (PFC) has been the cornerstone of community and sustainability in Ann Arbor. From its modest origins in Detroit's Eastern Market to its current location in downtown Ann Arbor, PFC has remained committed to providing accessible, sustainable and locally sourced food options.

Troy Clarke, marketing, outreach coordinator at PFC, emphasizes their dedication to local, sustainable, organic and fair-trade offerings. "Every purchase at PFC not only supports our mission, but also contributes directly to the sustainability of the organization."

PFC is more than just a grocery store; it's a community hub promoting mindful living and environmental stewardship. In 2023 alone, PFC diverted 60,000 pounds of food scraps from landfills through composting initiatives and recycled approximately 220,000 pounds of cardboard annually. Additionally, PFC supports local nonprofit organizations through its Change for Our Community program, demonstrating its commitment to societal well-being.

Reflecting on PFC's unique position, Clarke highlights their core values and community connection. "Our foundational principles and connection to the community set us apart and ensure our continued relevance and growth."

Location: 216 N. Fourth Ave., Ann Arbor. For more information, call 734-994-9174, email Marketing@PeoplesFood.coop or visit PeoplesFood.coop. See ad page 21.

Unlocking Wellness Online with Ayurveda For Us

Austin Vantastic, an Ayurvedic Practitioner, is revolutionizing holistic health with Ayurveda For Us, offering personalized consultations to rejuvenate mind, body and spirit.

"Are you tired of the endless cycle of doctor visits with no improvement in your health? Ayurveda offers hope and promise in restoring vitality and well-being," says Vantastic. "In Ayurveda, we understand that each individual is unique, and healing requires a tailored approach based on your specific constitution (Dosha) and current condition (Vikruti). Through personalized consultations, I guide clients on their journey to optimal health."

Ayurveda For Us provides online consultations, where clients receive personalized guidance to address chronic health issues and reclaim their vitality. With a focus on diet, herbalism, mental and spiritual healing, and lifestyle adjustments, Ayurveda offers a holistic approach to wellness.

"For those seeking an alternative approach to health and wellness, Ayurveda For Us offers tangible solutions to improve quality of life," adds Vantastic. "Whether you're struggling with chronic health issues or simply seeking to optimize your well-being, Ayurveda has the potential to transform your life."

To schedule a free 30-minute discovery call, visit Calendly.com/d/4dc-gws-6fw/discovery-call. To make appointments or for more information, visit AyurvedaFor.us. See ad page 28.

Better Health Market Presents Free May Event

Better Health Market Novi is inviting everyone to spend the day with them from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., May 18, and learn how to better your health from the inside out.

"Admission is free and open to the public," says Better Health Community Wellness Director and certified health coach Kathleen Freydl. "And we will be giving out free $25 grocery bags to the first 25 attendees who visit all the tables."

Better Health Market will be hosting some of their favorite local healers and wellness practitioners along with a few special guests. Many of their in-store vendors, such as Garden of Life, Nordic Naturals, Enzymedica, Mega Food, Truvani, Ancient Nutrition, New Chapter and more, will be on hand to answer important supplement questions and pass out free samples.

"We invite everyone to come and taste-test some of the many healthy snack and beverage options we offer here at Better Health, where our name is our mission," adds Freydl. "If you are a local health practitioner and would like to partner with us at this amazing community health and wellness education event, please contact me right away. Space is limited."

Location: 42875 Grand River Ave., Novi. To participate as a vendor or for more information, call Kathleen Freydl at 313-549-2225, email Kathleen@BetterHealthMarket.com or visit BetterHealthMarket.com/eventmanager. See ad inside front cover.

Positive Intelligence: From Saboteurs to Sages

Transformational coach Dan Gormley says, "PQ (Positive Intelligence) will transform your life!" He helps people build powerful

habits for a positive mind. "During the PQ program, you get to build a foundation of mental fitness by strengthening three critical mental muscles to shift the balance of power from your inner saboteurs (left brain) to your inner sage (right brain). With lifelong applications to work and life, the opportunity is yours to continue to grow."

Gormley is a PQ and Agile coach, PMI-ACP, PMP and DAS-SM. He says, "As a transformational coach, I will teach you how to empower your sage right-brain thinking to overcome daily negative thoughts and stress. I will motivate you to figure out your true calling; and to work out a plan to achieve your goals, regardless of where you are currently in your life and career." All sessions are delivered virtually via Zoom.

For more information, call 904-377-5789, email DGormley23@outlook.com or visit PositiveIntelligence.com. *See ad page 16.*

Ann Arbor Earth Day Festival: A Day of Sustainability, Community and Fun

The Leslie Science and Nature Center announces the much-anticipated Ann Arbor Earth Day Festival 2024, promising a day of environmental education, community engagement and sustainable fun. This free event, scheduled for 1 to 4 p.m., April 21, is designed to inspire and empower individuals of all ages to advocate for a healthier planet.

This nature-filled, community-oriented event will be filled with activities, workshops and live entertainment all dedicated to promoting sustainability and environmental awareness. This annual celebration has become a cornerstone Earth Day celebration for the city of Ann Arbor, drawing families, environmental enthusiasts and community members together to honor our planet.

The festival will feature a range of activities including hands-on displays, educational sessions on green building, sustainable agriculture and water conservation, as well as interactive exhibits from local environmental nonprofits and agencies. Highlighting the event's commitment to reducing environmental impact, the festival aims to continue its zero waste tradition by diverting an average of 90 percent of waste from landfills.

"We believe that through education and community engagement, we can confront the environmental challenges ahead of us," says Susan Westoff, president and executive director of the Leslie Science and Nature Center. "The Ann Arbor Earth Day Festival is not just a celebration; it's a call to action. It's an opportunity for families to come together, have fun and learn how to contribute to a sustainable future."

Attendees are encouraged to bring their reusable water bottles and join in the Earth Day Parade, a festival highlight where children and adults alike can dress up as their favorite animals, join in with musical instruments and parade through the nature center grounds.

Leslie Science and Nature Center is a natural oasis within Ann Arbor, offering trails, raptor enclosures, the Critter House and a range of public programs designed to inspire ecological awareness and sustainability among all age groups. Committed to providing hands-on learning experiences, the center fosters curiosity, discovery and a deep appreciation for the natural world.

Location: 1831 Traver Rd., Ann Arbor. To volunteer or for more information, call 734-997-1553, email Info@Lesliesnc.org or visit Lesliesnc.org.

Yoga Therapy for Metastatic Breast Cancer

Catherine Franklin, founder of True Evolution, is offering an eight-week yoga program designed specifically to support women as they navigate living with metastatic breast cancer. Weekly sessions will be held May 6 through June 24 on Monday mornings from 8:30 to 10 a.m. at a private studio on the west side of Ann Arbor. Sessions include therapeutic yoga, compassionate discussion and group support during and between sessions.

A private 60-minute intake session will be completed prior to the start of the program. This program does require that participants are able to move from the floor to standing and climb/descend stairs without assistance. Yoga mats and accessories will be provided or attendees are welcome to bring their own. No prior yoga experience is necessary.

Franklin says, "My work is focused on helping people live more comfortably and peacefully in their bodies. The system of yoga is so beautifully complex. It has far more to offer than most people realize. Essentially, it empowers us to change how we experience our lives. Yoga helps us heal what can be healed and be at peace with that which is beyond our control."

Cost: $295. A sliding scale is offered based on ability to pay. The private intake session is included in the program fee. To register or for more information, call 734-864-2694, email Catherine@TrueEvolutionYoga.com or visit TrueEvolutionYoga.com.

New Way to Diagnose Autism

According to a 2023 study by Yale scientists published in the journal *Nature Neuroscience*, two distinct neurodevelopmental abnormalities that arise shortly after the start of brain development have been linked to the emergence of autism spectrum disorder (ASD). The researchers created brain organoids using stem cells from 13 boys with the disorder, including eight with macrocephaly, a condition in which the head is enlarged. The organoids were small replicas of developing brains that mimicked neuronal growth in the fetus.

The study found that children with ASD and macrocephaly showed an excessive growth of excitatory neurons, while those without macrocephaly exhibited a deficit of the same type of neurons. Measuring the prevalence of certain types of neurons, as was done in this study, could help doctors diagnose autism and also identify which autism cases might benefit from existing drugs that treat excessive excitatory neuron activity.

County Declares Loneliness a Public Health Crisis

San Mateo County near San Francisco is the first county in the U.S. to declare loneliness a public health crisis. The resolution, which commits the county to address the issue but does not set aside funds to reduce loneliness, was inspired by the United Kingdom and Japan, which appointed ministers to tackle the problem. Future efforts by San Mateo County may include investments in infrastructure to make neighborhoods more accessible, social media posts that encourage social interaction, and the earmarking of community mental health dollars for organizations that develop or offer solutions.

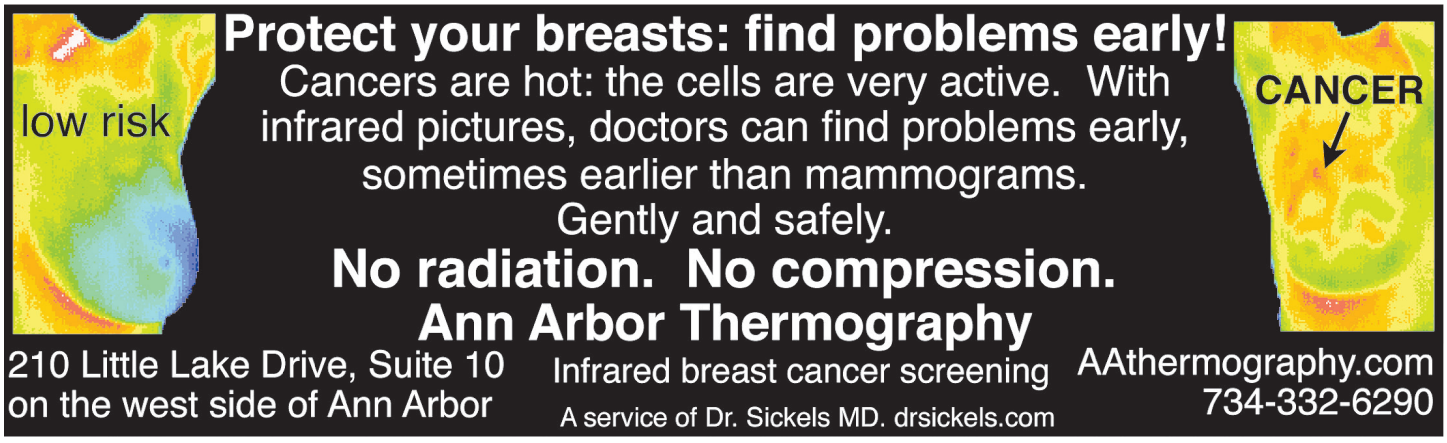
Loneliness has been associated with increased risk of dementia, depression, anxiety, heart disease and stroke. A British study found that those that lived alone and had no visitors had a 39 percent increased risk of premature death compared to those visited by loved ones daily.

Treating Anxiety with Mindfulness

According to a randomized clinical trial published in *JAMA Psychiatry*, mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) has been found to be a well-tolerated treatment option that can be as effective as commonly prescribed anxiety medications. The study involved 276 adults with diagnosed anxiety disorders that were randomly assigned to either an eight-week MBSR course or treatment with escitalopram, a first-line anxiety medication. Anxiety levels were assessed using the Clinical Global Impression of Severity scale (CGI-S).

At the end of the study, both the MBSR and escitalopram groups experienced a reduction in their mean CGI-S score, with no significant difference between the two groups. MBSR was well-tolerated, with no dropouts due to adverse events, whereas a higher percentage of participants in the escitalopram group reported adverse events. The results demonstrated that MBSR was not inferior to escitalopram in reducing anxiety symptoms.

An estimated 301 million people worldwide are affected by anxiety disorders, including generalized anxiety, social anxiety, panic and agoraphobia, causing significant distress, impaired functioning and elevated risk of suicide.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Balancing Glucose for Mental Clarity and Energy

In the modern world, burnout has become pervasive due to stress and overwork. However, emerging research suggests that biohacking techniques can mitigate burnout's effects and promote overall well-being. Among these techniques, managing glucose levels stands out as crucial for enhancing brain function, mental clarity and physical energy.

Elevated blood sugar levels pose risks for diabetics and contribute to inflammation, weight gain, fatigue, and increased susceptibility to conditions like cardiovascular disease. Stable blood sugar levels, conversely, improve mental health and sustain energy, vital for achieving goals and maintaining cognitive function.

Three simple strategies can regulate glucose spikes effectively:

Strategic Eating: Start meals with high-fiber vegetables, followed by proteins and fats, and conclude with carbohydrates and sugars. This sequence slows sugar absorption into the bloodstream.

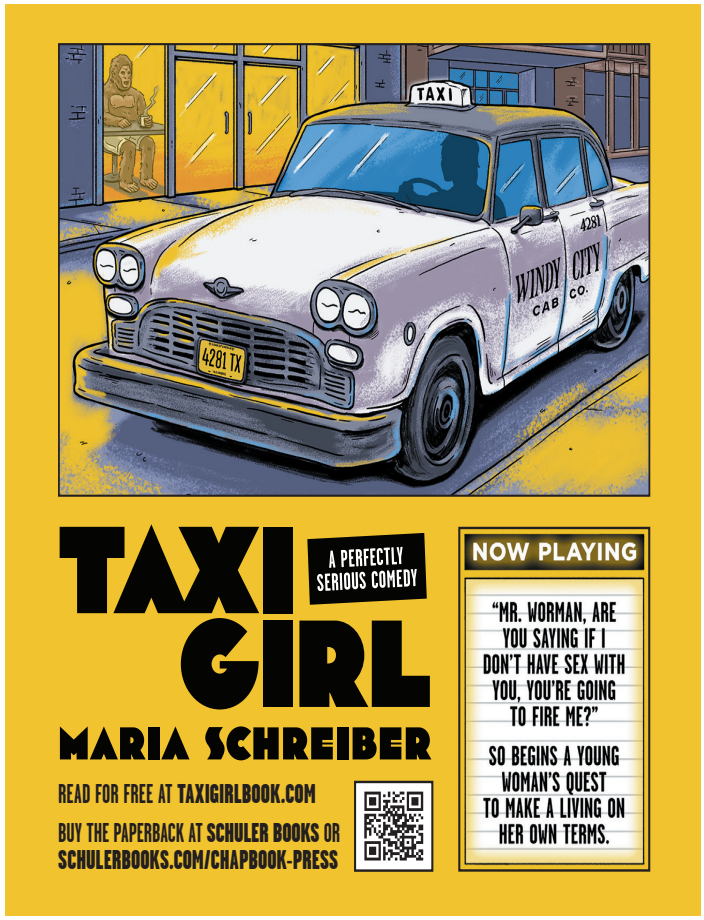
Post-Meal Movement: Engage in light exercise or take a brisk walk for about 15 minutes after meals to aid digestion and regulate blood sugar.

Apple Cider Vinegar: Incorporate apple cider vinegar before consuming starchy or carbohydrate-heavy meals to lower the glycemic response.

Understanding how glucose levels fluctuate throughout the menstrual cycle, particularly during the luteal phase, offers insights for women's health. Managing dietary choices during this phase can alleviate PMS symptoms associated with glucose spikes, such as irritability, fatigue, and mood swings.

By implementing these modifications, individuals can lay the groundwork for optimal brain health. Dr. Daniel Amen, a respected psychiatrist and neuroscientist, underscores brain health's importance in preventing mental illness. This holistic approach forms the cornerstone of coaching programs by Amy Zygart, PharmD, also known as The Spiritual Pharmacist.

Subscribe to the weekly newsletter and enjoy a 10 percent discount off coaching packages for Natural Awakenings *magazine readers. For guidance on biohacking techniques and holistic wellness, call 203-751-0986, email Amy@TheSpiritualPharmacist.com or visit TheSpiritualPharmacist.com.*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Harmony Unveiled:

The Tao of Tai Chi with Master Wasentha Young

Nestled in the heart of Ann Arbor, amidst the hustle and bustle of daily life, lies a sanctuary of tranquility—a place where the mind, body and spirit converge in perfect harmony. This oasis is none other than Peaceful Dragon School, the studio of Master Wasentha Young, a revered figure in the realm of Tai Chi and Chi Kung.

Born into a world where Eastern philosophies were just beginning to seep into the Western consciousness, Master Young found herself drawn to the ancient arts of Tai Chi and Chi Kung at a tender age. Under the guidance of mentors who were pioneers in their own right, she embarked on a journey of self-discovery that would shape her destiny.

Reflecting on those formative years, Master Young reminisces, "I was young and clueless, but I had mentors who were reevaluating their lives. They introduced me to meditation, Tai Chi and Chi Kung, and I embraced these practices as part of my being."

As the cultural landscape shifted in the late 60s, there emerged a palpable hunger for spiritual enlightenment and holistic wellness. Influenced by luminaries like John Lennon and the influx of Eastern teachers, Master Young found herself at the forefront of a burgeoning movement.

Today, her studio stands as a beacon of light, attracting seekers from all walks of life. What sets Master Young apart is her holistic approach, which transcends mere physical exercise. "I help my students make connections between the mechanics of Tai Chi and Chi Kung and their everyday lives," she explains. "It's about finding balance—physically, mentally and spiritually."

Indeed, the benefits of Master Young's teachings extend far beyond the confines of the studio. Students not only experience improved physical health and mental clarity but also gain invaluable tools for navigating life's challenges with grace and resilience.

But what truly sets Master Young apart is her unique blend of wisdom and humor. "I teach with a sense of humor because life, like Tai Chi, has its serious moments but also its moments of folly," she quips. "By infusing laughter into our practice, we learn to find joy amidst the chaos."

For those seeking a path to inner peace and vitality, Master Wasentha Young's studio offers a sanctuary where ancient wisdom meets modern living. Step into the world of Tai Chi and Chi Kung and unlock the secrets of harmonious living.

The Spiritual Journey

Master Young's journey is not merely one of physical movements, but of spiritual awakening—a journey that began in her youth and continues to unfold with each passing day. "Tai Chi and Chi Kung are more than just exercises," she reflects. "They are gateways to a deeper understanding of ourselves and the universe."

Drawing from ancient Taoist principles, Master Young teaches her students to cultivate a state of inner harmony—a state where mind, body and spirit are in perfect alignment. "In Tai Chi, we learn to move with the flow of life," she explains. "We become like water, adapting to whatever challenges come our way."

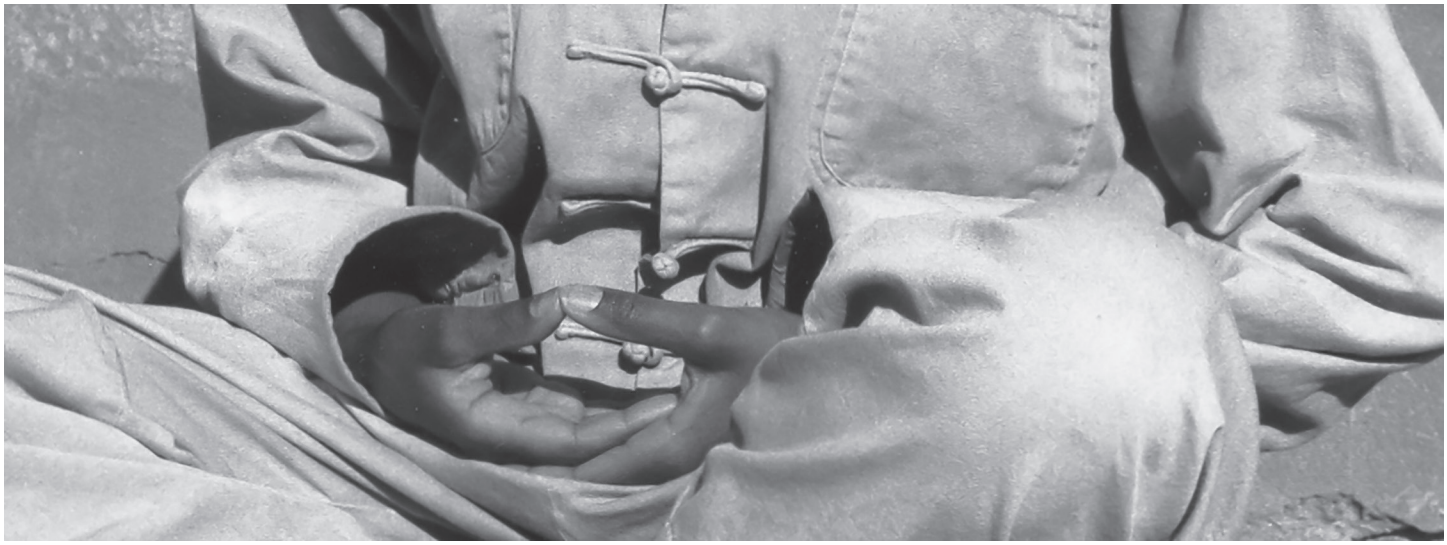
The Art of Transformation

Beyond her role as a Tai Chi instructor, Master Young is also an accomplished artist, channeling her spiritual insights into breathtaking mosaic artworks. She finds inspiration in the natural world, capturing its beauty and essence in her mosaic artworks. "Mosaics are like life," she muses. "They're made up of countless individual pieces, each one unique and valuable in its own right."

Through her art, Master Young seeks to reveal the interconnectedness of all things—a theme that echoes throughout her teachings. "Just as each tile contributes to the beauty of the mosaic, so too does each individual contribute to the tapestry of life," she explains.

Looking to the Future

As Master Young looks to the future, her vision extends beyond the walls of her studio. She plans to establish a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping teens manage stress—a testament to her unwavering commitment to serving her community.



As she reflects on her journey, she remains committed to sharing the wisdom of Tai Chi and Chi Kung with future generations. "My goal is to create a ripple effect of positive change," she says. "By empowering others to connect with their inner selves, we can create a more harmonious world."

With plans to expand her offerings and reach even more students, Master Young is poised to leave a lasting impact on the world. "The journey never ends," she reflects. "There's always more to learn, more to explore and I'm excited to see where it takes me next."

For those who seek a path to inner peace and vitality, Peaceful Dragon offers a sanctuary where ancient wisdom meets modern living. Step into the world of Tai Chi and Chi Kung and unlock the secrets of harmonious living.

Location: 1945 Pauline Blvd., Ste. B, Ann Arbor. Register early for spring/summer, May 6 to August 8 classes, by April 20 and receive a $10 savings. To register or for more information, call 734-741-0695, email Wasentha@PeacefulDragonSchool.com or visit PeacefulDragonSchool.com. See ad below.

"In Tai Chi, we learn to move with the flow of life, we become like water, adapting to whatever challenges come our way."

– Master Young

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Sustainable Travel

Wanderlust With the Earth in Mind

by Sara Kaplan

Whether travel is enjoyed for much-needed relaxation, cultural immersion or the opportunity to volunteer in an eco-program spotlighting permaculture or farming, journeying to places far and near greatly enriches our human experience. During these environmentally critical times, our travels may carry a hefty price tag that the planet can no longer afford. This does not mean we need to sacrifice adventure. Every traveler can make a difference not only for the Earth but for the local communities they visit.

According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, 8.1 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions can be attributed to travel and tourism. Being in the know and taking more responsibility for our environmental impact can be easier than commonly assumed, all the while inviting unexpected enjoyment.

Amanda Reiser, a global sustainable tourism specialist based in Pennsylvania, encourages her clients to consider the three pillars of sustainable tourism: environment, economy and equity. "We all can play a part in fostering sustainable tourism and creating a more sustainable world," she explains, noting that a green-minded approach benefits not only the traveler but also the destination. "Ask yourself: Does my participation in this activity create a negative impact on the natural environment? Are there any actions to help reduce my environmental impact?"

A traveler's footprint extends to the socio-cultural fabric of the destination, too. Reiser reminds travelers, "You may be in your destination for only a week, but the people who live there year-round feel the impacts of visitors every day, for better or worse." By respecting local traditions and engaging locals in a respectful and inclusive manner, tourists can contribute positively to the cultural integrity of the communities they visit.

Greener Horizons

Instead of hitting all the trendy, transportation-reliant sights, opt to slow down and stay in one place for a longer period. This not only invites a richer, deeper experience but minimizes the need to hop onto another plane or bus. To support the local economy of a desired destination, buy locally produced items and book small, private hotels and inns, rather than international chains. Dining at locally

Dmitry Pichugin / CanvaPro

Kamchatka / CanvaPro

owned eateries supports small business while giving travelers higher-quality fare and a more authentic cultural experience.

When planning a trip, contemplate the many treasures of domestic travel or choose a location that is not drowning in overtourism. The influx of tourists can significantly strain fragile ecosystems, deplete resources and disrupt the lives of local communities. Consider destinations that can be crossed via boat, train or bus, such as the New York-Montreal border or clusters of countries in Europe or Southeast Asia.

Packing With Purpose

Making small choices even when packing a suitcase goes a long way. Bring eco-friendly sunscreen and opt for brands that avoid chemicals harmful to coral reefs and tropical environments. Pack a cloth tote bag for daily excursions and a reusable water bottle to avoid single-use plastics. Remember that by using plastic containers more than once, we reduce the amount of waste that is released over time. Try not to overpack—bring only the most necessary items, preferably those that can be recycled, reused and disposed of properly.

Sojourning With Savvy

To avoid getaway glitches, become acquainted with local laws and regulations. When planning a fishing excursion, for example, identify the legally designated fishing spots and avoid harming endangered species, which are heavily protected under national and international regulations. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) offers an interactive map to show where legal fishing areas are by state (*fws.gov/fishing/map*). Historical resources should also be taken into consideration. For instance, the Florida Keys require special permits for cultural, maritime, heritage and archeological explorations, including snorkeling expeditions of ancient shipwrecks and other unique, underwater sites.

It is always best to ask whether a destination is a naturally protected sanctuary or requires special permits. The FSW is a good reference site for information on activities in national wildlife refuges and the endangered animals that live there. To enjoy these areas to their fullest, make sure to find a knowledgeable local tour guide that understands the laws of the land.

Traveling consciously involves personal responsibility toward the environment through individual actions. "You can make a difference," says David Knight, a professor

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of tourism management at Colorado State University. "Regenerative travel is not just leaving things the way you found them. It's a matter of giving more than you take."

Don't Be Greenwashed

Greenwashing is a corrupt practice by companies that claim to support conscious tourism but fail to live up to their claims. Vetting businesses when planning a trip means delving into third-party research and reports to check the fine print. Before booking, make sure the ecolodge or eco-touring company being considered has a legitimate certification on their website. The Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) sets global standards and provides accreditations for destination managers, hotels and tour operators. There are also certifying groups in specific locations, such as the Sustainable Tourism Association of Hawaii, and others that are accredited by the GSTC, like Preferred by Nature.

For tourism operations that have not been certified, the onus is on the traveler. "Check with the local chambers of commerce. They should know who is working toward sustainability and can direct you to those aligned with what you are looking for," says Claudia Gil Arroyo, an agricultural agent for the Rutgers University Cooperative Extension, in New Jersey. "If a tour operator or destination does not have a clear goal on how they're contributing to the environment, it is unlikely that they are actually green."

For tourism to be truly sustainable, it must also be economically viable for local communities. Economic sustainability ensures that tourism dollars benefit the local economy, creating fair wages, local sourcing and community empowerment, and allowing communities to thrive while preserving their cultural heritage. When traveling, support local, eco-friendly businesses that provide sustainable products.

A good example is agritourism—a vacation stay at a participating local farm—which can provide exciting, hands-on learning experiences. "Get out there. Look for your local growers and check out the services and activities they offer," says Gil Arroyo. "People have this idea that agritourism is just picking your pumpkins and that's it, and there's so much more that can be done at a farm."

Eco-Friendly North American Parks

North America is home to many national parks—63 in the United States and 48 in Canada. Here are five exceptional examples that provide a sustainable, eco-friendly vacation experience.

Yellowstone National Park is known for its geothermal features, including the famous Old Faithful geyser. It also has a diverse range of wildlife, including grizzly bears, wolves and herds of bison. This U.S. park has implemented sustainable practices such as renewable energy installations, waste management programs and educational initiatives to promote conservation.

Great Bear Rainforest is a temperate locale on the central and northern coasts of British Columbia, Canada. It is home to a variety of wildlife, including the rare Kermode bear, also known as the spirit bear. The park works closely with First Nations communities, implementing conservation measures to protect biodiversity and support eco-conscious businesses.

Everglades National Park is a unique wetland ecosystem in Florida known as the "River of Grass". It provides habitat for numerous endangered species, such as the Florida panther and the West Indian manatee. The park employs restoration efforts to preserve the natural water flow and conserve wildlife, with plenty of opportunities for eco-friendly recreational activities like kayaking and hiking.

Cape Breton Highlands National Park is located on the northern tip of the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. It offers breathtaking coastal views, rugged cliffs and stunning hiking trails. The park implements waste reduction, energy conservation, ecological restoration and educational programs to promote environmental stewardship.

Redwood National and State Parks, in California, are home to the tallest trees on Earth, the majestic coast redwoods. Sustainable eco-practices include trail maintenance and restoration, wildlife protection, interpretation programs to educate visitors about the delicate ecosystem, and conservation efforts to combat climate change and preserve redwood habitat.

Sara Kaplan is an environmentally conscious freelance writer and eco-traveler from Fort Collins, CO.

Connecting to Sentient Earth

by Marlaina Donato

David Fuentes Prieto / Shutterstock.com

Each April, Mother Nature spills blossoms from her apron as songbirds trill the songs of their ancestors and prepare for the next generation. Contrary to widespread human assumption, many animal species grieve, express empathy and form bonds that still elude our complete understanding. Trees communicate through complex root systems. Plants respond to environmental and emotional stimuli. Wolves howl their soul-song, and particles of desert sand emit bell-like frequencies if the wind's provocation is just right. Our planet is alive on levels beyond our senses or scientific instruments.

To the ancient Greeks, Gaia (also known as Gaea) was a living being separate from the gods that ruled the Earth—a primordial, maternal entity from which all life springs. Through the centuries, luminaries such as Plato or 1970s scientist James Lovelock have endeavored to define this life force, but perhaps 12th-century abbess and visionary Hildegard von Bingen came closest when she coined the word *veriditas* to denote "the greening power of nature". Whether we see this innate energy as simple photosynthesis or handiwork of a higher power, sentient Earth is our all-providing, intelligent resource from cradle to grave.

Many of us can remember a moment in childhood when nature startled our consciousness, be it in a drop of pond water under a microscope or in the shocking power of a summer thunderstorm. We ran barefoot over her grassy lap, made wishes on stars and boggled our minds trying to grasp the concept of light years. This intimate relationship with the planet and her cosmic connections may dwindle in adulthood, but something deep within our souls—if we are honest with ourselves—longs to reunite with anima, Earth's ever-present, pervasive energy.

Earth Day is an invitation to sync our hearts to Gaia's force, feel the holy purpose of roots beneath our footsteps and witness her sanctity by planting a simple container garden or inhaling her breath of spring deeply into our lungs, exhaling gratitude.

Marlaina Donato is an author, multimedia expressionist and a cultivator of wild well-being. Connect at BluefireStudio.art.

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Farm Vacations

American Agritourism Grows in Post-Pandemic Times

by April Thompson

Long a staple of European travel, agritourism is growing in popularity in the United States, as concrete-weary urbanites seek out a taste of country living and a way to support small-scale farms. The concept broadly covers any activity linking agriculture with tourism, and it takes as many forms as there are farms. Farm-stay options run the gamut from helping with farm chores like feeding chickens and collecting eggs to structured classes on weaving, soap making or beekeeping.

"Living in towns and cities, most Americans are very disconnected from nature and agriculture. Farm stays are helping to make an important urban-rural connection," says Scottie Jones, founder of Farm Stay USA, an association connecting travelers with working farms and ranches that offer hands-on opportunities and overnight accommodations.

Since 2007, Jones has operated her own farm stay, the 70-acre Leaping Lamb Farm, in Alsea, Oregon. She has been surprised at many guests' "agricultural illiteracy", underscoring the importance of the educational experiences that farm stays like hers offer. "I used to send guests off to graze in the garden alone, but then realized many people don't know what carrots look like in the field," says Jones. "I would get questions like, 'Don't you need a brown cow to make chocolate milk?'"

More than one in three guests to Leaping Lamb Farm return for subsequent stays, a very high retention rate for the lodging industry. "We get to watch families grow up as they return to the farm year after year. That has a real impact, as we need the next generation to get involved in farming and food systems," Jones notes.

Justin Bolois, of Los Angeles, got introduced to agritourism in Tuscany, later seeking out the farm experience closer to home. "We had been living in New York City at the time and came to value the expansive countryside being in Italy," he says. "The family, which ran a vineyard, would cook incredible meals for us. Vacations are great when they mirror the experience of living in a place, and agritourism is one of the closest ways to access that."

Bolois and his wife later discovered Straus Home Ranch, in Marshall, California, and fell in love with the place and its people so deeply they hosted their wedding there. The ranch was founded by a pair of pioneers in organic farming and land conservation in Marin County, and it was later revitalized to include a farm stay by siblings Vivien, Miriam and Michael Straus after their parents' deaths. "You can tell that Vivian and Michael not

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only care about what they do, they also care about you, and about you enjoying their life mission. That's a very special bond to develop with an agritourism owner," Bolois says.

The ranch features special touches, including a beautifully equipped kitchen to shuck local oysters or to host private chefs for farm-fresh meals served on a handcrafted table made of reclaimed redwood from their old hay barn. There is no cellphone reception on the ranch, encouraging guests to kayak, hike, birdwatch and stargaze.

"After being cooped up during COVID, people want to see wildlife and biodiversity again. People are aching to disconnect from their screens and reconnect with nature—what we call 'dirt therapy,'" says Ashley Walsh, president and founder of Poconos Organics, one of the largest Regenerative Organic Certified farms on the continent, sprawling across 380 acres in Long Pond, Pennsylvania.

Walsh built the boutique resort, The Village at Pocono, with her grandfather when she was 25 as a sister destination to the farm. The accommodations feature full kitchens where guests can cook a cornucopia of produce fresh from the fields. Visitors can enjoy luxurious amenities on site, then pop over to the farm to attend hands-on cooking classes, wellness retreats, farm tours and more.

Beyond connecting with rural life, farm stays are a meaningful, mutually beneficial way for farmers and consumers to reconnect on a personal level. "Agritourism puts a face to farming. We want to educate people so they can make better choices in food and get to experience what really fresh food tastes like," Jones says.

Connect with Washington, D.C., freelance writer April Thompson at AprilWrites.com.

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Ashley Walsh

From Personal Health Crisis to Organic Farming

by Carrie Jackson

Ashley Walsh-PoconoOrganics

As the founder of Pocono Organics, a leading regenerative organic farm in Pennsylvania, Ashley Walsh understands that the way food is grown can determine its nutritional properties and significantly impact the environment. Her own journey from illness to wellness led her to organic foods and responsible farming practices. It is a remarkable story of triumph over adversity and can inspire others on the path to lifelong well-being.

In her late 20s, Walsh was diagnosed with gastroparesis, a devastating condition that involves the partial paralysis of the stomach, making every meal a painful prospect. "I couldn't digest most fruits, vegetables or meat, and was in excruciating pain with vomiting and nausea, which led to malnutrition," she recalls.

Desperate for help, Walsh exhausted every treatment Western medicine had to offer. "I cycled through medications without relief and even tried Botox. When my doctors recommended feeding tubes and cutting out parts of my stomach, I turned to functional medicine," she explains. "After experimenting with juicing and smoothies, I was finally able to get nutrients and nourishment from real food. This led to a broader detox. I cut out processed food, additives and dyes and introduced plant-based supplements and non-toxic personal care items."

The more Walsh moved toward an organic diet and lifestyle, the better she felt. "I started seeing undeniable results and went from feeling sick five days a week to having symptoms only five days a month. My whole life, I'd eaten low-quality food like corn chips, cheese sandwiches and pizza, not realizing what I was putting in my body," she muses.

While she transitioned to a healthier lifestyle, Walsh was assistant director at Fox Sports, a job that required constant travel, and finding the healthy ingredients she needed was difficult. "I was frustrated that the supply did not meet the demand for nutritious, whole food. At the same time, I wanted to share my passion for using

food as medicine, and it was in the back of my mind to start a small community farm for a while," she recalls.

At a 2015 impact investing conference, Walsh learned how a business could help people and the planet, while still making a profit. "This truly resonated with me, and the seed was planted," she explains. "I leased a 50-acre parcel of land from the family business and called Rodale Institute, the leader in organic and regenerative farming practices, for consultation."

Pocono Organics opened its gates to the public in 2019 and has flourished ever since. The 380-acre farm hosts tours, community events, cooking classes, an organic market and a café. It is a global center for research and discovery, as well as an agritourism destination for guest retreats. "Pocono Organics creates moments and experiences that inspire change and transform lives through wellness, health, food diversity and sustainability," Walsh asserts. "We give people emotional souvenirs through experiences where they can taste and touch real foods and learn why things like soil health are important. Guests develop a connection with nature and see where their food comes from."

Walsh hopes to instill preventative wellness and lifelong healthy habits in a younger generation. "We have a program called Clean Foods, Healthy Hands, which teaches kids to plant, harvest and cook in a healthy way. From an early age, they're out in the fields eating raw broccoli and cauliflower! They can still have their favorite foods, but they learn to add squash to the macaroni and cheese and end up liking it better. These habits stay with them their whole lives," she says.

More than anything, Walsh wants people to be mindful of the impact their food choices have. "Every day you have at least three opportunities to make a difference in how you nourish yourself," she says. "The more we can get food from farms and not factories, the better we can live and work in harmony with nature. Food truly is medicine, and making an investment in your health helps the planet, and therefore other people, too."

Carrie Jackson is a Chicago-based freelance writer and frequent contributor to Natural Awakenings. *Connect at CarrieJacksonWrites.com.*

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From Organic to Grass-Fed to Regenerative

Finding the Best Farming Practices

by Sara English

AlexRaths / CanvaPro

Embarking on a journey toward healthier eating often begins with a quest for a better understanding of food-labeling and food-sourcing options. For those taking their first steps into the world of healthy eating and sustainable agriculture, terms like grass-fed, organic and regenerative can be both intriguing and perplexing. Understanding these distinctions empowers consumers to make choices aligned with their values and priorities when selecting food products.

Conventional Farming

"Conventional farming practices involve very heavy equipment, heavy tillage and a lot of inputs—chemical fertilizers, herbicides and pesticides," says Elizabeth Whitlow, the executive director of the Regenerative Organic Alliance. "Despite its high outputs, conventional farming does not necessarily guarantee nutritious, healthy crops."

A majority of our meat originates from animal feeding operations (AFOs), where animals are commonly raised in confinement and fed genetically modified grains, as opposed to grazing or foraging in pastures or rangelands. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, "Manure and wastewater from [AFOs] have the potential to contribute pollutants such as nitrogen and phosphorus, organic matter, sediments, pathogens, hormones and antibiotics to the environment."

Grass-Fed Beef

Grass-fed farming focuses on feeding livestock grass rather than grains and, in some cases, allowing them to forage for their food, which is considered more humane than AFOs. Rotational grazing, common in grass-fed farming, contributes to environmental sustainability by promoting soil fertility and biodiversity.

According to a 2019 review published in *Nutrition Journal* that compared the nutritional profiles of grass-fed and grain-fed beef, scientists from the California State University College of Agriculture noted that grass-fed beef tends to be lower in overall fat and higher in several heart-healthy fatty acids and antioxidants, including omega-3s, conjugated linoleic acid, precursors for vitamins A and E, and glutathione. The authors also note, "To maximize the favorable lipid profile and to guarantee the elevated antioxidant content, animals should be finished [fed before slaughter] in 100 percent grass or pasture-based diets."

While there is no federal standard for a grass-fed label, third-party certifiers that may lend a level of reliability include the American Grassfed Association and A Greener World. Look for 100 percent grass-fed and grass-finished certification, and remember that a grass-fed label doesn't automatically mean that the product is organic or regenerative organic.

USDA Organic Certification

Established by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) in 1990, the USDA Organic certification and farming practices focus on soil health, biodiversity and natural methods of pest and weed control, rather than using synthetic inputs like chemical fertilizers, pesticides and

herbicides, or genetically modified organisms. According to the USDA, 17,445 certified organic farms operated a total of 4.9 million acres in 2021, amounting to less than 1 percent of U.S. farmland. From 2019 to 2021, sales of organic crops increased 5 percent to $6.1 billion.

A 2019 study published in the journal *Environmental Research* reported that an organic diet may reduce exposure to a range of pesticides in children and adults. A 2024 review of studies published in the journal *Food* noted that certain health benefits have been associated with a higher consumption of organic foods, including a reduction in obesity, improvements in blood nutrient composition and a reduction in the development of non-Hodgkin lymphoma and colorectal cancers. Rodale Institute's Vegetable Systems Trial, a long-term, side-by-side comparison of conventional and organic methods, is designed to analyze nutrient density and explore the links between soil health and human health.

Regenerative Farming

In addition to adhering to the core principles of organic farming, regenerative agriculture sets out to actively rejuvenate and improve ecosystems, nurture soil health, foster biodiversity and promote water retention, with the added benefit of sequestering environmental carbon by returning it to the soil. According to Kegan Hilaire, a small-farms consultant for Rodale Institute, this type of farming prioritizes human health, farmworker conditions, animal welfare and animal integration into farming methods. Farms and products that bear the Regenerative Organic Certification (ROC) label "meet the highest standards in soil health, animal welfare and social fairness," Whitlow explains. As of 2023, 156 farms and about 1.1 million acres have received this certification, which is overseen by the Regenerative Organic Alliance, a nonprofit group of experts in farming, ranching, soil health, animal welfare, and farmer and worker fairness.

Voting With Our Pocketbooks

Hilaire points out that only about 1 percent of the U.S. population are farmers, fewer are certified organic or regenerative, and many small farms employ these methods without getting the official paperwork. "The best certification is meeting your farmer and deciding if you trust where your food is coming from," he suggests.

Grass-fed, organic and regenerative organic foods each offer unique benefits, from improved nutrition to environmental sustainability. Every purchase becomes a vote for the kind of world we want to live in. By selecting products aligned with our values, we can collectively drive positive change in the food system and shape a healthier, more sustainable future for generations to come.

Sara English is the owner of Wild Roots Farm Marketing, a digital marketing firm for regenerative farmers and ranchers. Connect at WildRootsFarmMarketing.com.

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Relief for Parkinson's Patients

How Traditional and Complementary Interventions Can Help

Wildpixel / CanvaPro

by Madiha Saeed, M.D.

According to the Parkinson's Foundation, more than 10 million people worldwide and nearly 1 million Americans are living with Parkinson's disease (PD). Every year, nearly 90,000 people in the U.S. are diagnosed with this ailment, which causes the gradual loss of dopamine-producing neurons in the brain. Symptoms that develop slowly over years include tremors; stiff muscles; a slow, shuffling gait; and difficulties with movement and speech.

There is no cure for PD, and by the time a patient is diagnosed, they may have already lost 60 to 80 percent of their dopamine-producing cells. According to Kenneth Sharlin, a board-certified neurologist and certified functional medicine doctor, the first line of defense for PD is levodopa (L-Dopa), a pharmaceutical that is converted to dopamine in the body. "Unfortunately, natural strategies don't get a lot of research, so no supplement has been shown to effectively treat the disease," he asserts. "Mucuna pruriens, a tropical legume that grows in Africa, Asia and the Pacific Islands, naturally contains levodopa, but studies have shown it to be unreliable."

Dopamine is a neurotransmitter that plays a role in controlling memory, mood, sleep, learning, concentration and movement. "If the car doesn't have gas, then you can't drive it," explains Sharlin. Once a patient is taking levodopa to bring dopamine levels up, complementary strategies can be employed to help manage PD symptoms by as much as 73 percent, according to a panel of doctors participating in The Parkinson's Solutions Summit. Exercise, sleep and even intimacy with a partner can all be managed well once the car has "gas" to drive it.

Exercise

According to Sharlin, the number one strategy for PD patients to maintain their motor function is exercise such as bicycling, chair yoga, movement classes in warm water pools, Pilates and dance. A meta-analysis published in *Gerontology and Geriatrics* analyzed 15 randomized controlled trials involving 498 participants in several countries to investigate the health impacts of self-directed physical activity (SDPA) on patients with early and mid-stage PD. The study examined the effects of moderate-intensity exercises, including aerobics, dance, strength training, flexibility exercises and Nordic walking. The researchers found that the SDPA significantly enhanced gait function, balance, mobility, function and postural control.

Gut Health

Monitoring gut function is very important for patients with PD, as constipation is very

common," states Trupti Gokani, a board-certified neurologist, health and mindset coach, and Ayurvedic expert. Improving gut function with the help of key nutrients from vegetables, fruits, clean protein, nuts and seeds, olive oil, herbs and spices has been shown to slow the progression of the disease. It is best to choose organic when possible, as that will decrease the exposure to brain-toxic chemicals. A gluten-free diet has also been found to improve PD symptoms.

Sharlin recommends an antioxidant-rich diet packed with polyphenols, along with green tea that contains catechins called epigallocatechin-3-gallate (EGCG), a natural antioxidant with neuroprotective properties.

Stress Reduction

Anxiety linked to PD can worsen the symptoms," Gokani points out. Chronic stress is a risk factor for PD, because it elevates the hormone cortisol, which can interfere with neuronal plasticity and damage dopamine-producing neurons in the brain.

Incorporating deep breathing, meditation and other relaxation techniques is integral to improving the patient's quality of life. According to Sharlin, "Mindfulness-based stress reduction techniques to self-regulate have a positive impact in regulating Parkinsonism."

New Test to Confirm Diagnosis

When a patient comes to his office exhibiting PD symptoms, Sharlin now has a new way to confirm a PD diagnosis by taking a small tissue sample and sending it to the lab to look for a neural protein called alpha synuclein, which is associated with PD. In a 2023 National Institutes of Health study involving 428 people with PD and 120 control volunteers, this skin biopsy was found to be very accurate, with 92.7 percent sensitivity.

Deep Brain Stimulation

According to Sharlin, deep brain stimulation (DBS) is a well-researched and well-developed treatment for PD. The surgical therapy involves implanting electrodes within areas of the brain to interrupt irregular signals that cause movement-related symptoms. A 2019 retrospective study of 400 patients that underwent DBS implantation found that 75 percent of the participants felt the procedure provided symptom control.

Focused ultrasound is another PD tool, using ultrasound beams to destroy areas in the brain cells that are causing movement problems. This procedure is permanent and can be done on only one side of the brain, so it helps symptoms on only one side of the body. Treatment to both sides could cause speech, swallowing or memory problems. Sharlin notes that the results from focused ultrasound are no better than DBS and involve more intense intervention. Also, not all Parkinson's patients are good candidates for this procedure.

Madiha Saeed is a holistic, functional and integrative doctor in Naperville, IL, and director of education for Documenting Hope and KnoWEwell.

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FRIDAY, APRIL 5

Spring Seva Yoga Series – Fridays, Apr 5-May 10. 10:30am. Suggested donation of $10/class. All proceeds to be donated to Almost Home Animal Rescue League. Pinckney Community Public Library, 125 Putnam St, Pinckney. Registration required: CrysterraWellness.com.

New Moon Night Hike – 7:30-9pm. Enjoy a night hike under the stars to celebrate the alignment of the moon and the sun. We will do some science experiments out on the trail and visit some of LSNC's nocturnal animals. Leslie Science & Nature Center, 1831 Traver Rd, Ann Arbor. Registration required: DiscoverScience AndNature.org.

SATURDAY, APRIL 6

Michael Gould: Harold Haugh Award Lecture/Recital – 7-8:30pm. Featuring current and former students of Dr. Michael Gould, Professor of Music in the U-M School of Music, Theatre & Dance (SMTD) and Residential College. The SMTD 2023 Harold Haugh award recognizes excellence in private studio teaching. Free. Keene Theater East Quad, 701 E University Ave, Ann Arbor. Tinyurl.com/MichaelGould.

SUNDAY, APRIL 7

Film Screening & Talk Back: *Bad Axe* – 10am-12pm. Film captures a closely knit Asian-American family in a rural Michigan community, as they now fight to keep their American dream alive as owners of a local prominent restaurant in the face of a global pandemic, racial reckoning, and generational scars from the Cambodian Killing Fields. Free. Helmut Stern Auditorium at UMMA, 525 S State St, Ann Arbor. UMMA.UMich.edu.

Stewardship Workday: Braun Nature Area – 1-4pm. Help remove exotic plants and help native plants thrive so they can soak up rainwater and runoff, filter pollutants and provide wildlife habitat. Tools and know-how provided. Free. Meet at the park entrance on Chalmers Dr, Ann Arbor. Pre-registration required: Tinyurl.com/4zr6s7ay.

TUESDAY, APRIL 9

Ann Arbor Backyard Beekeepers Meeting – 7-9pm. Dr. Amy Trang Vu will delve into the theme of "Hot Topics in Beekeeping" via Zoom. Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 N Dixboro Rd, Ann Arbor. mbgna.umich.edu.

Big Fun – 8pm. Some of Michigan's most talented instrumentalists blend jazz, funk, bluegrass and more. $20. The Ark, 316 S Main St, Ann Arbor. TheArk.org.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 10

Ann Arbor Wild Ones Monthly Meeting – 6-8pm. Topic: Spring Glory: A Guided Tour Of Ephoferals in the Redbud Nature Area. 2380 Parkwood Ave, Ann Arbor. AnnArbor.WildOnes.org.

Open Stage – 8pm. Take your music to the masses. Open Stage nights offer supportive audiences and a terrific space. Fifteen performers have 8 mins (or 2 songs) each to do their thing. $3, $2/members, seniors, students. The Ark, 316 S Main St, Ann Arbor. TheArk.org.

THURSDAY, APRIL 11

2024 Vernal Pool Patrol Training – 10am-12pm. A training on how to collect survey information for a vernal pool. This will include identifying vernal pool indicator species, soil and habitat types. Lloyd & Mabel Johnson Preserve,4595 Platt Rd, Ann Arbor. LegacyLandConservancy.org.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

SEPTEMBER 16–19

Dr. Chi Fingernail and Tongue Analysis Clinics – Monday, September 16, through Thursday September 19. Chi is a world-renowned expert in the Eastern medical art of fingernail and tongue evaluation. He travels the globe teaching clinicians and evaluating patients with many medical conditions. All visits are by appointment only. Call to schedule your appointment. Wycoff Wellness Center, 1226 Michigan Ave, East Lansing. 517-333-7270.

SATURDAY, APRIL 13

Stewardship Workday: Folkstone Park – 9am-12pm. Volunteers are needed to join NAP for a morning in the woods to remove exotic plants that don't serve the remaining natural communities. Tools and know-how provided. Free. Meet at the park entrance at the north end of Folkstone Crt, Ann Arbor. Pre-registration required: Tinyurl.com/rmeura8w.

SUNDAY, APRIL 14

Sowing Cacti and Succulent Seeds – 1-4pm. Michigan Cactus & Succulent Society meeting. Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 N Dixboro Rd, Ann Arbor. mbgna.umich.edu.

A Peek Inside the Deli Kitchen: Mozzarella Making – 4-5:30pm. A hands-on and demonstration-based learning opportunity to practice basic and advanced mozzarella making techniques. Zingerman's Delicatessen, 422 Detroit St, Ann Arbor. ZingermansDeli.com.

THURSDAY, APRIL 18

Cheese 101: Basics of Cheese – 6:30-8:30pm. Explore the world of cheese through the lens of a cheesemaker and cheese seller in this delicious introduction to all things cheese. Zingerman's Delicatessen, 422 Detroit St, Ann Arbor. ZingermansDeli.com.

U-M Jazz Showcase – 8pm. Featuring drummer Jeff "Tain" Watts. $15/general, $20/reserved, $5/student with ID. The Ark, 316 S Main St, Ann Arbor. TheArk.org.

SATURDAY, APRIL 20

Refugia Festival – Apr 20-21. A 2-day festival advocating for environmental conservation and preservation through the sense of sound. Festival highlights the sonic beauty of our natural surroundings through music performances, educational programming, and community service to create meaningful environmental change on a local level. Nichols Aboretum, 1610 Washington Heights, Ann Arbor. mbgna.umich.edu.

SUNDAY, APRIL 21

Ann Arbor Earth Day Festival 2024: Celebrating Sustainability and Community – 1-4pm. Festival features displays, hands-on activities, live entertainment and informative sessions on green building, sustainable agriculture, water awareness and more. Leslie Science & Nature Center, 1831 Traver Rd, Ann Arbor. DiscoverScienceAndNature.org.

TUESDAY, APRIL 23

Artist Spotlight: David Wilcox – 8pm. "Songs with passionate, beautiful lyrics sung in a soulful voice," *SPIN*. Free; please bring a nonperishable food donation for Food Gatherers. The Ark, 316 S Main St, Ann Arbor. TheArk.org.

FRIDAY, APRIL 26

Fireside Fun – 5:30-9pm. There's nothing quite as relaxing as sitting around a campfire, roasting marshmallows and swapping stories. Free. Leslie Science & Nature Center, 1831 Traver Rd, Ann Arbor. DiscoverScienceAndNature.org.

SATURDAY, APRIL 27

River Roundup – 9am-5pm. Meet your team onsite at the first of 2 sampling locations. At each site, search through stones, leaves and sediment to find bugs in their natural habitat. Each team includes an

experienced volunteer who has been trained in sample collection. Only trained volunteers go in the water to collect the samples. Huron River Watershed Council, 117 N 1st St, Ste 100, Ann Arbor. 734-769-5123. Registration required: hrwc.org/volunteer/roundup.

Tree Planting – 10am-12pm. Volunteers will be planting bare root saplings and installing protective tree tubes around them throughout the preserve. Beckwith Nature Preserve, 2792 Morton Rd (M-106), Stockbridge. LegacyLandConservancy.org.

Debunk the Myths of Weight Loss – 10:30am-12pm. Informational only seminar on: The "True" Keys to Optimal Weight Discover Why It's Difficult to Lose Weight or Maintain Healthy Weight. Gather and understand cutting-edge information regarding weight management. Debunk myths; create a new reality of optimal weight. Fuel your goals or set new ones. Free. The Health Hub, 3492 W Park Rd, Luzerne. TheHealthHubllc.com.

SUNDAY, APRIL 28

Gemily – 1pm. Gemily (Gemini + Emily) is the folk music trio comprised of Laz and San Slomovits and San's daughter, Emily. $15, $10/kids 12 and under. The Ark, 316 S Main St, Ann Arbor. TheArk.org.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17

Dr. Chi Fingernail and Tongue Analysis FREE Seminar – 6-8pm. Chi is a world-renowned expert in the Eastern medical art of fingernail and tongue evaluation. He travels the globe teaching clinicians and evaluating patients with many medical conditions. Please reserve your seat by contacting the office. Wycoff Wellness Center, 1226 Michigan Ave, East Lansing. 517-333-7270.

Beaver Tales Nature Walk – 1-3pm. Take a walk along Sam Graham Trees Trail with MBGNA and local experts to learn about the recent beaver activity on and around Fleming Creek. Matthaei Botanical Gardens, 1800 N Dixboro Rd, Ann Arbor. mbgna.umich.edu.

PLAN AHEAD

SATURDAY, MAY 4

Workday at Sharon Hills Preserve – 10am-12pm. Volunteers will help remove invasive species garlic mustard. Sharon Hills Preserve, Sharon Hollow Rd, Sharon. LegacyLandConservancy.org.

MONDAY, MAY 6

Tai Chi Chua and Chi Kung Spring/Summer Classes – May 6-Aug 8. Early bird registration by Apr 20 and get a $10 savings. Use code: ss2024 when registering online Peaceful Dragon School, 1945 Pauline Blvd, Ste B, Ann Arbor. 734-741-0695. PeacefulDragonSchool.com.

Yoga Therapy for Metastatic Breast Cancer – Mondays, May 6-June 24. 8:30-10am. With Catherine Franklin, founder of True Evolution. Sessions include therapeutic yoga, compassionate discussion and group support during and between sessions. $295; sliding scale offered. For more info or to register: 734-864-2694 or Catherine@TrueEvolutionYoga.com. TrueEvolutionYoga.com.

SATURDAY, MAY 18

Health & Wellness Fair – 10am-4pm. Better Health Market will be hosting some of their favorite local healers and wellness practitioners along with a few special guests. Free. Better Health Market Novi, 42875 Grand River Ave, Novi. BetterHealthMarket.com.

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DAILY

Ayurveda For Us – Provides online consultations, where clients receive personalized guidance to address chronic health issues and reclaim their vitality. With a focus on diet, herbalism, mental and spiritual healing and lifestyle adjustments, Ayurveda offers a holistic approach to wellness. To schedule a free 30-min discovery call: Calendly.com/d/4dc-gws-6fw/discovery-call. For more info & appt: AyurvedaFor.us.

Herbs for the Southeast Michigan Garden – Learn how to grow and use 20 culinary and medicinal herbs suited for the southeast Michigan garden. Will cover preservation techniques, basic medicine making and crafting herbal oils, poultices, infused honeys and vinegars plus more. Free. More info & register: CastleRemedies.podia.com.

Introduction to Homeopathy Class – Learn how to choose remedies and how to use them. Class contains nearly 4 hrs of pre-recorded videos. Downloadable resources. $75. More info & register: CastleRemedies.podia.com.

Holistic Health Consultation – 9am-7pm. Online or phone consultation consultations last about 1 hr and are provided by Certified Xolar Vibronics Holistic Educator and Life Coach Ikaro Phoenix. Be introduced to various techniques, elements or holistic ways of viewing the situation which help the soul to be reeducated and empowered to deal with problems and eliminate them from their root. $150. For appt: LivingWisdomCoaching.earth.

Pets & Parents Reiki Session – 9am-9pm. Sessions for wellness, critical care and end of life transition. Actively experience the use of reiki touch with your pet. Learn additional tips for helping your pet. Virtual 40-min appt. $20. 231-590-0001. TCDesoto@gmail.com.

The Best Affirmation for You – 10am. Learn about the power of affirmations and how they can bring about positive events and circumstances. Call for a 10-15-min consultation with a licensed professional counselor to pick the best affirmation for you. Purchase an affirmation stone to enhance what you are affirming in your life by having a visible reminder. Free. 734-644-6943. Harmony2c.com/affirmation-stones.

Tiny Lions Lounge & Adoption Center (TLC) – 12-7pm, Wed-Sun. Offers feline-friendly activities with kittens and cats available to take home. 5245 Jackson Rd, Ste A1, 734-661-3575. TinyLions.org.

WEEKLY

Yoga with Crysterra Wellness – Variety of classes Tues-Thurs. Cost varies. For schedule & details: CrysterraWellness.com.

Stop Sabotaging Your Self-Care – Christy DeBurton will guide you on a journey of self-discovery to examine the obstacles that stand in the way of you taking better care of yourself. 4-wk self-paced online course. $79 (regular $149). Yoga Room, 889 Honey Creek Dr, Ann Arbor. Info@ChristyDebBurton.com. YogaRoomAnnArbor.com/online-courses-self-care.

SUNDAYS

Bach Flower Remedies Level 1 Live Web – 3rd Sun. Learn how to use the 38 Bach flower remedies to help yourself and others conquer fear, worry, overwhelm, low self-esteem, lack of focus, poor concentration, trouble sleeping and more. With Nancy Buono, BFCP, Director of Bach Flower Education. BachFlowerSchool.com.

Hudson Valley Humane Society Rescue Reading – 10am-12pm. Includes humane education lessons, group read-aloud and dog meet-and-greet. Drop-off event. $10; space limited. HSHV.org/RescueReading.

Online Meditation from Anywhere – 11am-12pm. Building an international sangha by connecting loving hearts. Donations welcome. To receive a link: CelesteZygmont2@yahoo.com or DeepSpring.org.

Sunday Talk with Demo Rinpoche – 11am-12pm. Jewel Heart Tibetan Buddhist Learning Center, 1129 Oak Valley Dr, Ann Arbor. 734-994-3387. JewelHeart.org.

Drop-In Tarot Study Group – 6:30-9pm. A drop-in group of tarot enthusiasts facilitated by Nicholas O'Donnell, using the Rider-Waite Tarot Deck. $15. Enlightened Soul Center & Shop, 2711 Carpenter Rd, Ann Arbor. 734-299-6472. NicksVictoryGardens@gmail.com. EnlightenedSoulCenter.com.

Inspiring Talk by Mata Yogananda – 7pm. Spiritual talk, pure meditation and silent prayer, with Winged Prayer for all in need at 9pm. Free. Self-Realization Meditation Healing Centre, 7187 Drumheller, Bath. 517-641-6201. SelfRealizationCentreMichigan.org.

MONDAYS

Weekday Morning Online Meditation – Mon-Fri. 7:30-8am. Insight Meditation Ann Arbor offers a 30-min online group sitting via Zoom. Free, donations gratefully accepted. InsightMeditationAnnArbor.org.

Beginner Tai Chi – 10-11:15am. A series of postures linked together in a fluid manner. Focuses on relaxation in motion, balance and the mind/body connection. Can attend one or both sessions per week (Mon morning &/or Thurs evening). $195. Peaceful Dragon School, 1945 Pauline Blvd, Ste B, Ann Arbor. 734-741-0695. PeacefulDragonSchool.com.

Soul Power Mystic Arts – 5pm. 2nd Mon & Wed. Re-claim the real you, hear your evolutionary calling, and cultivate the nature mystic within through 4 retreats, individual training, self-acceptance process, nature qigong, plant ally ceremonies and body-ecology psychology. Sliding scale. Mother Bear Sanctuary, 20470 Barton, Pinckney. 734-796-6690. MotherBearSanctuary.com.

Meaningful Mondays – 8pm. SevaLight Retreat Centre warmly welcomes everyone, of all faiths, meditation practices and traditions, to join us virtually. Will gather on video conference sharing in song/chants and inspiring readings from Mata Yogananda Mahasaya Dharmaji's writings, followed by Pure Meditation and silent prayer. Free. Email by 10am any Mon to receive the info about how to join by video: Info@SelfRealizationCentreMichigan.org.

TUESDAYS

Senior Discount Tuesdays: Castle Remedies – Customers over the age of 65 can receive a 10% discount on their in-store purchases. In the Parkway Center, 2345 S Huron Pkwy, Ann Arbor. 734-973-8990. CastleRemedies.com.

Online Meditation from Anywhere – 9-9:30am. Building an international sangha by connecting loving hearts. Donations welcome. To receive a link: CelesteZygmont2@yahoo.com or DeepSpring.org.

Hypnotherapy – 9:30am-7pm, by appt. Also Wed. Cheryl Beshada teaches and specializes in personal empowerment, releasing blocks and patterns of negative behavior, higher self-communication. Free consultation. Warren. 586-899-9009.

5 Hidden Gems in Your Normal Blood Work – 8-9pm. 3rd Tues. Join Dr. Jena for her Bloodwork Webinar and learn 5 hidden gems that can help you go from unhealthy to healthy. Free. BigBeautifulChiropractic.com.

WEDNESDAYS

Get the Most from Your DNA Test – 6-8pm. Learn what you can do with your results and what additional opportunities are available for discovering your genetic genealogy. Understand the science, how to find information and how to share that information. Course 39651. $59. Washtenaw Community College, 4800 E Huron River Dr, Ann Arbor. 734-677-5060. wccnet.edu/noncredit.

Your Lipid Panel: What Bad Cholesterol Really Means – 8-9pm. 3rd Wed. Grab your latest bloodwork and let's dive into your blood work and let me teach you how to look for hidden answers. Free. BigBeautiful Chiropractic.com.

THURSDAYS

Class Observation – 11-11:45am. Ann Arbor School of Massage, Herbal and Natural Medicine, 3684 W Liberty Rd, Ann Arbor. RSVP: 734-769-7794. NaturopathicSchoolOfAnnArbor.net.

Qigong: Basics – 11:15am-12:15pm. Class introduces participants to basic self-care stretches, breathing, meditations and self-acupressure for reducing muscle tension, increasing mindfulness, and revitalization. $180. Peaceful Dragon School, 1945 Pauline Blvd, Ste B, Ann Arbor. 734-741-0695. PeacefulDragonSchool.com.

Beginner Tai Chi – 6-7:15pm. A series of postures linked together in fluid manner. Focuses on relaxation in motion, balance and the mind/body connection. Can attend one or both sessions per week (Mon morning &/or Thurs evening). $195. Peaceful Dragon School, 1945 Pauline Blvd, Ste B, Ann Arbor. 734-741-0695. PeacefulDragonSchool.com.

Thursday Hills of Ann Arbor – 6:30pm. We ride some of the best hills A2 has to offer. A/B/C: 10-40 miles. Start at Wheels in Motion, 3402 Washtenaw Ave Ann Arbor. WheelsInMotion.us.

Thursday Evening Silent Meditation – 6:30-8:15pm. With Insight Meditation Ann Arbor. Free, donations gratefully accepted. Zion Lutheran Church, 1501 W Liberty St, Ann Arbor. 734-994-4455. InsightMeditation AnnArbor.org.

Meditation Class – 7-8pm. Short lesson and meditation, followed by discussion with instructor Lori Barresi. Drop-in, every other Thur. $10. Enlightened Soul Center, 3820 Packard, Ste 280, Ann Arbor. 734-358-0218. EnlightenedSoulCenter.com.

The Thyroid Panel: Get the Real Story of What's Happening with Your Thyroid – 8-9pm. 3rd Thurs. Learn how to find hidden answers in the bloodwork that you already have so that you can finally get some answers as to why you feel the way you do. Free. BigBeautifulChiropractic.com.

FRIDAYS

Online: Prayer Power Hour – 12-12:30pm. Prayer changes things. Our goal is simple: to love you, pray for you and introduce you to our loving Creator, the Great Healer. Free. Tinyurl.com/PrayerPowerHour.

Esoteric Tarot for Beginners – 7-8:30pm. Drop-in study group with Nick O'Donnell. Features the bare bones and basics of tarot symbolism to get you reading the cards immediately. Every class will explore the basics of 4 cards per session. $15 suggested donation. Enlightened Soul Center & Shop, 2711 Carpenter Rd, Ann Arbor. 734-358-0218. fb.me/e/2MeGXs0VE.

SATURDAYS

Certified Hypnotherapists Education and Networking Meeting –9:30am-12pm. 1st Sat. Certified Hypnotherapists welcome. Includes educational presentation, workbook and digital material. Clinical Hypnosis Professional Group, Warren. Register: 586-899-9009.

Pregnancy, Childbirth, Postpartum and Baby Classes – 6-7pm. Classes are held virtually online led by our top AID instructors utilizing state of the art visual aids and activities to keep it fun and engaging while presenting the latest evidenced based material on each topic. $35/class. Childbirth-Classes.com.

Classifieds

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Rosanne Emanuele is a licensed acupuncturist, certified by the National Certification Commission for Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM). Her acupuncture methods are the result of 25 years of full-time practice. Clients enjoy the results they achieve from her individually assessed treatments. Her easy friendly manner makes her skills seem casual and second nature. First-time patients are often thrilled by the lack of pain and the rapid improvement in their condition.

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517-599-4949
MiraculousEnergies.com

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210 Little Lake Dr, Ste 10, Ann Arbor
734-332-9936
DrSickels.com

Malcolm Sickels earned his M.D. from the University of Michigan, where he taught fellow medical students about different approaches to health. Board certified in Family Medicine and Holistic Medicine, he is in solo practice on the west side of Ann Arbor. Learn more at Dr. Sickels.com. *See ads, pages 8 and 13.*

Holistic Mental Wellness

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Karen8Kerr@gmail.com
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734-475-1892
MFCenter.org/rent

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School/Education

ANN ARBOR SCHOOL OF MASSAGE, HERBAL & NATURAL MEDICINE
734-769-7794
NSHAAssociates@gmail.com
NaturopathicSchoolOfAnnArbor.net

ANN ARBOR
SCHOOL OF MASSAGE, HERBAL & NATURAL MEDICINE

Massage therapy training is a one-year program that fulfills the 717-hour, state-licensed professional training with the required 80 hours of clinical internship. The rate for scheduled, Tuesday through Friday appointments at our student massage clinic is $50/hr. *See ad page 25.*

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Center - A Joyful Journey
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Tai Chi & Qigong

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1945 Pauline Blvd, Ste B, Ann Arbor
734-741-0695
PeacefulDragonSchool.com

Tai chi promotes relaxation, is a meditation in motion and is known for increasing balance. Qigong means energy. This class includes Wild Goose Form, stretching, meditation and self-acupressure. *See ad page 11.*

Weight Loss

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modern well-being
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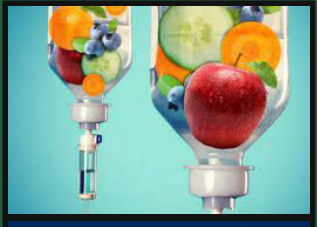

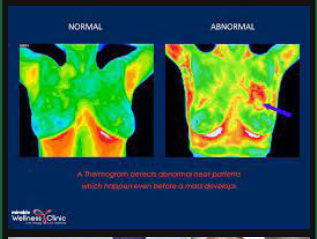

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